

THE
LAWFULNESS
OF
SEPARATION,
FROM A
Right Constituted CHURCH,
VINDICATED:



OR, A
DISCOURSE,
SHEWING,

That it may so happen, that a CHRISTIAN,
may not only Lawfully, but of Necessity is
bound, to Separate from the Communion of a
CHURCH, that hath been Rightly Constituted.

.By a Lover of TRUTH.



Sho

(7)



Printed in the Year, M DCCXXII.

THE

NEW YORK

OF

THE

NEW YORK

THE

THE

THE

THE

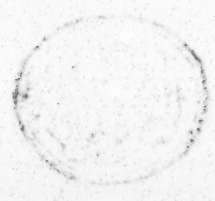
THE

THE

THE

THE

THE



THE



To the READER.

Christian READER,

TO Thee that art joyned to a True Constituted CHURCH, (whose Head is the Lord Jesus Christ,) I recommend the ensuing Discourse. But more especially to such as are Invaded (or threatned so to be) with the Errors of the Times, which are now grown so Rampant, and these corrupted with them so Bold and Confident, that they even boast of the great Progress their Corrupt and Antichristian Notions have made in this Kingdom, within a few Years last past. The Subtily of Satan herem appears very great, transforming himself into an Angel of Light, pretending most diligently to promote Piety, that thereby he may introduce a new Gospel, and draw off the Children of God from the true Gospel of Christ: endeavouring to establish Works, perswading to work for Life, and by Works of Congruity, (as some speak,) to procure Acceptance with God, thereby, in effect, slighting, yea, despising the free Grace of God; and imputed Righteousness of Christ, which is the only Righteousness, which will stand Sinners in stead at the Great Day. In the serious Thoughts of these Things, and Concern of Soul, how those that have been Asserters of the Truths of the Gospel are now become Dumb, are fast Asleep, cannot, dare not, or will not, Speak for the Cause of God and the Truth, as it is in Jesus, whereby those abominable Doctrines (abhorred by our first Reformers from Antichristianism) have obtained a new Life, and are received and embrac'd of Multitudes with great Applause; Musing with my self, and Bewailing the Matter, the Words in the following Discourse insisted on, were presented to me with such Weight,

A 2

that

that I could not throw it off. I have indeed since had great Reasonings with my self against Exposing it to Publick View, because of my small Ability, wishing some other Hand more skilful than mine would exert it self in so good a Cause; but finding none as yet appears, I set this forth in the Fear of God, hoping it may provoke others to go farther in stemming the Torrent of those mighty and growing Errors, which Infest the Churches of Christ at this Day, viz. Arianism, Socinianism, Arminianism, or, The New Remediating Law, which some of our learned Divines have set up in the Room and Place of the Gospel of Christ, which many are endeavouring to Establish as a Way to Heaven, thereby destroying (as much as in them lies) the Truth of the Gospel of Christ; which New Law, or Pretended Gospel, seeming to promote Godliness, being agreeable to Carnal Reason, and to the Pride of Fallen Man, who would fain be his own Saviour, doth more easily prevail, not only with the common Multitude, but with some sincere Christians, who are not so well Confirmed in the Gospel of Christ, as could be wished they were. And to the Discourse following is not intended as a Confutation of those Errors, yet, to those who do see them, and are concerned of the Evil that is in them, it gives some Light how they may deliver themselves, that they be not Partakers with others in their Sins. I know the other Doctrines are most taking with the Carnal World; for not many Rich, not many Mighty, not many Noble, are called. Our Lord saith, his Kingdom is not of this World, and if any Man will be his Disciple, he must take up his Cross and follow him: But this New Law is too agreeable to Carnal Reason to suffer the Cross, and is appendant to the Kingdom of this World and not to the Kingdom of Christ; which is manifest from that Fear, Distrust, and Trembling, that attend such as seek Justification by their sincere Obedience to this New Law, or Law of Grace, as they call it. Whereas the Kingdom of Christ consists in Love, Joy, Peace, Meekness, Temperance, Faith, and all the Fruits of the Spirit, against which there is no Law. And I humbly offer it as my Opinion, that the Gospel of Christ, for many Years, was never so like to be overthrown as at this Day; and therefore there never was more need of standing and contending for the Faith once delivered to the Saints.



ADVICE TO CHRISTIANS IN A CHURCH-STATE.

In the 16th Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans,
and 17th Verse it is thus written,

— Now I beseech you Brethren, mark them that
cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctr-
ine which ye have learned and avoid them.

THE Author of these Words we find to be the great
Apostle PAUL, who was called of God to be a Ser-
vant of Jesus Christ; and he styles himself the *Churches*
Servant for Christ's sake. Under these Consi-
derations he wrote this Epistle, *To the Saints of God that are*
at Rome, who are the called and beloved of God, as you have
it at large in the 1st Chapter of this Epistle. Where you may
also observe in Ver. 8. the great Joy that the Apostle was in,
thanking God for their great Faith. *First*, (saith he) *I thank*
God through Jesus Christ for you all. What for? *That your*
Faith is spoken of throughout the whole World. From hence we
may note by the way, that the Churches then at Rome, were
very famous in the World, for the Soundness of their Faith in
Christ Jesus. But the Apostle seem'd to be apprized, that they
were like to be assaulted with some Trouble, as in Ver. 11.
He

He tells them, that *He longs to see them, that he might impart to them some spiritual Gift.* (To what End?) Why, *That they might be established, and that he might have Comfort with them, by their mutual Faith; by the mutual Faith* (saith he) *of you and me.* And so goes on to shew unto them, his Readiness and Willingness to come unto them, to preach the Gospel of Christ; *For* (saith he) *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the Power of God unto Salvation, to every one that believeth;* in hopes thereby to establish them in the Faith, and to strengthen them against the Error, they were (or were like to be) assaulted with. And so goes on to Council them against the Vices, they were incident to, notwithstanding they were got into a Church-State, which did not secure them from falling into Error; which Consideration, doubtless, gave Birth to the Words first read, as most suitable to them, before he concluded his Epistle:

NOW I beseech you Brethren, mark them that cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine you have learned, and avoid them.

THE Apostle doth not command, as he might have done, but entreats them in the most endearing Expressions, *Now I beseech you Brethren, &c.*

WHY the Apostle put the Word *NOW*, in the Front, may be, because he was about to conclude his Epistle; and before he so did, had something of Importance to impart to them; wherefore he would not slip this Opportunity; therefore saith, *NOW I beseech you Brethren;* or else might be *Now*, even *Now*; for that they were assaulted with corrupt Doctrines, and that the Apostle was apprized of the Arguments made use of by those that did own them, as is plainly suggested to us in several Places of this Epistle; and in particular in Chap. 9. Ver. 19. *Thou (carnal Reasoner) wilt (or dost say) Why doth he yet find Fault, who hath resisted his Will?*

IN the preceding Verses, the Apostle is setting forth, the free-Grace of God and his Sovereign Pleasure towards some of the Sons of Men, against which Doctrine, there were some amongst the Romans made Opposition; and did thus carnally reason, as was before hinted, *Who hath resisted his Will?* Observe in the next Words, the Reply that the Apostle made, *Now*

but, O Man, who art thou that repliest against God? (in Ver. 20.) Shall the Thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? And so on. From whence, I say, 'tis plain, that the Saints at Rome, even in their infant State, were assaulted with corrupt Doctrines, contrary to what they had been learnt of him, or of the Spirit of God; wherefore the Apostle saw it necessary before he concluded his Epistle, to put them in mind of this so necessary a Duty, as, *To mark them that cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine* (saith he) *which you have learnt, and avoid them.* As if the Apostle had said, My dear Brethren, are you assaulted with Doctrines that are contrary to what you have learned, even to give you Offence, and cause Divisions amongst you; and are you perplexed in your Minds what to do in the Matter? Why, I cannot advise you better than to mark them that trouble you with them, and avoid them. The Request of the Apostle to the Faithful in Christ, consists in Two Things,

First. TO mark those that bring in these new Doctrines, that cause Divisions, and give Offences.

Secondly, THAT they would not only mark them, but avoid them also.

IN these two Parts there are two Words, that are worth our while to consider, that is, the Word *MARK*, and the Word *AVOID*.

First. THE Word Mark, is to take 'special Notice of, well to weigh, and consider, as in 3 *Ruth*, Ver. 4. where *Ruth* was charged by *Naomi*, her Mother-in-Law, to Mark the Place where *Boaz* did lie down, (that is) to take 'special Notice well to observe the Place.

Secondly. TO Mark, as worthy *Wilson* notes, is as a Watchman that standeth on a high Tower to descry the Approach of an Enemy, he marketh diligently all Comers, and giveth Notice accordingly for the saving of the City; which well adapts it self to our present Text. Every Christian in a Church of Christ, is (or ought to be) on his Watch, to keep down his own Corruptions, and to save the Church from corrupt Doctrines, and to make an Alarm at the Approach thereof.

BUT

BUT next, the Word (Avoid). *First.* To avoid is to withdraw, or to turn aside from, to reject or forsake the Persons, or Things we are not pleased with. 3 *Titus* 9. *Secondly.* To avoid, as in our Text (as Mr. *John Dodati* of *Geneva* well observes) is to exclude or expell them out of Church-Communion, that bring in or trouble them with new Doctrines, contrary to what they have learn'd, exclude them, as prophane Persons; out of your Assemblies, by Excommunication; and that privately (saith he) shun all voluntary, pleasing and intimate Conversation with them. And then to shun them, is to keep your selves from their pernicious Principles, and to resist to all Men the Purity of the Church, &c. From this short Explanation I propose Three Things to be observed as Doctrines from our Text.

First. **THAT** the Churches of Christ, tho' the purest and strongest in the true Faith, are liable to the Assaults of corrupt Doctrine, and to be drawn away thereby, if they avoid them not betimes.

Second Doct. **THAT** the only way for the Churches of Christ to keep themselves pure, and free from **DIVISIONS**, is to be found in the Discharge of this great Duty, Of marking those Persons that bring new Doctrines amongst them, and to avoid them (i. e.) expell them out of their Societies.

Third Doct. **THAT** where these new Doctrines are creeping into Churches, and the People are so fallen asleep that they see it not, 'Tis the great Duty of Ministers, as Watchmen on a high Tower, to make Discovery thereof, and to endeavour, as much as in them lieth, to awake the People out of their sleepy Frame, and beseech them to *mark those that cause Divisions among them, with Doctrines contrary to what they have learn'd, and to avoid them.*

THIS last Observation may seem long, but I humbly conceive, that it's fully couch'd in the Words first read. But I shall proceed on the first Doctrine observ'd from the Words, (to wit,) That the Churches of Christ, tho' the purest and strongest in the Faith, are yet liable to the Assaults of corrupt Doctrine, and to be drawn away thereby, if they avoid not the Bringers thereof betimes.

THIS Doctrine is so fully comprehended in the Words of
our

our Text, that there is no need of further Proof. But to stop the Mouths of Gainsayers, and for Order sake, I shall proceed to prove it to the meanest Capacity. And then we may first consider, what these People at *Rome* were, to whom this Epistle was written. They are acknowledged by the Apostle to be the called of God, and that by Jesus Christ, as in the first Chap. Ver. 6. and so on, *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be Saints.* Observe the Extasy of Joy that the Apostle brake forth into, even to bless God for their being so sound and strong in the Faith, that it was spoken of throughout the whole World, as in Ver. 8. *I thank my Gods for you all, that your Faith is spoken of throughout the whole World.* These I said before, were the called of Jesus Christ, and are the Saints of God; and as such, we may suppose them to consist of several Congregational Churches. As you see he mentions One in particular, as in the 5th Ver. of this 16 Chap. of the *Romans.* *After greeting Priscilla and Aquila, likewise; saith he) Greet the Church that is in their House.* And in the 4th Ver. he mentions also all the Churches of the Gentiles; which carries full Proof, that these People to whom this Epistle was written, were true Churches of Christ, and sound in the Faith. And if you cast your Eye on what the Inhabitants of *Rome* were, and consider what they now are, what's more plain, than that they are drawn aside from the Truth; and that true and sound Believers, in a Church-State, are liable to be carried away from the Truth by corrupt Doctrines? What Church hath so fallen, as these Churches of *Rome* are? Who have set up Laws of their own making, to govern themselves by, and are become the very Sink of Superstition and Idolatry? 'Tis even now there where *Antichrist's* Seat is. But,

Secondly. IT doth more plainly appear, if you turn to the Epistle written to the Churches of *Galatia*, as in the 1st Chap. and so on throughout the whole Epistle, where you may observe, that after he had given an Account of his Apostleship, and that it was not of Man, but by Jesus Christ, as was his usual Method to all to whom he wrote, to usher in by what Authority he wrote to them, he takes Occasion to reprove them, as in Ver. 6. *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Christ, unto another Gos-*

B

pel,

pel, which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. It seems they were removed in their Thoughts of being justified by the Righteousness of Christ, and were about to establish another Way of Salvation, even the Law of Works, under softer Terms (to wit) another Gospel: But the Apostle would not let it go under that Disguise, but adds in the 8th Ver. But tho' we or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel to you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed. This seem'd to lye with great Weight on the Apostles Spirit, that he repeats it in the 9th Ver. As we said before, so say I now again, That if any Man preach any other Gospel than that which ye have received, let him be accursed.

TO inforce this on their Minds, he thus reasons with them, *Do I now perswade Men or God, or do I seek to please Men, but I certifie you Brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me, is not after Man, for I received it not of Man, neither was I taught it, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.* As if the Apostle had said, this new Gospel is meerly of Man, and taught by Man, and not of God; therefore be not deceived thereby, nor harken to its Charms, altho preach'd by an Angel from Heaven, or the greatest learned Doctor upon Earth. In the 3d Chap. the Apostle breaks forth in great Concern of Mind for these Churches of *Galatia*, in the 1st Ver. with this Outcry, *O foolish Galatians! Who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the Truth, before whose Eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth and Crucified.* And may not we say, *O foolish Britains! Who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the Truth? One Thing would I learn of you, Received you the Spirit by the Works of the Law, or by the hearing of Faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the Flesh?* Which holds forth to us, that these Churches of *Galatia*, were once sound in the Faith, and were now drawn away by another pretended Gospel; which fully proves, that the Doctrine advanced is true; that the purest and truest Churches of Jesus Christ are liable to be assaulted with corrupt Doctrines, and to be drawn away thereby. But as these wise Men saith, a three-fold Cord is not easily broken; I shall therefore add a third Instance.

Thirdly,

Thirdly. Y O U may find in the *Revelations* 1st, 2d and 3d Chapters, of the Seven Churches that were in *Asia*, there was but one of them, but what God had a Complaint against, for revolting from him; which God threatens with Punishment, if they reformed not. And we may safely conclude from hence, that what hath been may be again. If the Churches in the Heat of their Zeal and Affection were drawn aside, even whilst the Apostles were amongst them, what may we fear will become of us, who are in the latter Days, whose Zeal and Affections are almost (if not quite) cold, what Use may we make of this Doctrine, so clearly proved to be true?

First. B Y way of Information. Is it so, that true Churches of Christ are liable to be assaulted with corrupt Doctrines, and to be drawn aside thereby? We may be thence informed, that they are in a great Mistake that glory in their Church-State, and conclude themselves happy, because the Church they belong to was once a true Church, notwithstanding they are so fallen, that there is scarce the Appearance of God or Religion amongst them. and yet do call themselves the only true Church. Surely the Mistake of these People is very great.

Secondly. W E may infer from hence, that they are greatly to blame, that are at Ease in *Sion*, and suffer corrupt Doctrines to be brought into the Church to which they belong, without marking the Persons who bring them in, and as much as in them lies, endeavour to have them expelled out of the Society. If the Danger of suffering corrupt Doctrines in a Church is so great: so great is the Duty of every Member of that Church, that is apprized of these corrupt Doctrines, to endeavour to avoid them, that give those Offences. But methinks I hear some say,

(*Object.*) W H A T can I do in this Matter, I leave all Things to the Management of the Elders and Deacons, who must answer for it, if any thing is done amiss? O my beloved Friends, do not deceive your selves so: Altho' 'tis true, that the Elders and Deacons must answer for what they do amiss, 'Tis as true that if you quietly submit, and yield to the bringing in of new Doctrines, that are offensive to the meanest Member, you are guilty thereof, and must answer for it. 'Tis you, and such as you, that betray the cause of Christ, and the

Purity of God's House. What think you, that you are placed in the Church of God only to receive the Sacrament, and to contribute towards the publick Charge? No, No, tho' the doing this is your Duty, yet this is not All, neither the Half of that you are to do in a Church State. For, First, you are to look well to your own Hearts, that they are rightly engaged towards God, in all religious Duties: Secondly, That you hear the Word of God with Affection: And, Thirdly, That you take the Heed what you hear, That you swallow not all down for Truth by Wholesale; because it comes out of your Ministers Mouth; but be like the noble *Bereans*, who search'd the Scriptures to find, whether the Things delivered be true or not: Fourthly, you are to look after your Brethren, that they go not astray; and if one falls to help him up in the Spirit of Meekness: And, if any one grows dull and secure in a lukewarm State, you are to stir them up to be upon their Watch, and to be zealous in the Things of God: As saith the Apostle, *Let us provoke one another to Love and good Works*, Heb. 10. 24. You are to look after your Ministers: that they are sound in the Faith, and such as are called of God, and not of Men only; even such as are willing to preach the Word of God in Season, and not out of Season: Yea, such as are seeking the Good of Souls; and the Honour of God, and not their own worldly Interest, nor how to please Men; for such there were in the primitive Churches, even in the Church of *Ephesus*, that were found to be Lyars, on the Churches Tryal of them; and God highly commended them for so doing. It was not look'd upon a Crime then, to find out the Deceit of Ministers, as you may see, *Rev. 2. 2.* where the Holy Ghost saith, *I know thy Works and thy Patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are Evil. And how thou hast tryed them that say they are Apostles, and are not; and hast found them Lyars lying, and deceitful Ministers crept into the Church of God betimes.* And yet we are so reformed by Ministers of our own making, if a Person do but so much as question the Doctrine they deliver, he is esteem'd either a malapert Fellow, or a contentious Person, a renter of Churches, a promoter of Sedition, and what not: But, my Friends, it is not what Men commend will stand the Test of the great Day; therefore, do thou thy Duty, and value

not

not what Men shall say. Fifthly, You are to look over and after the whole Church collectively, to observe at the Table of the Lord, whether there be any one wanting, and if you find it to be so, to go to him and enquire, with all humbleness of Mind, the Reason thereof, and do your utmost to resolve his Doubts, and encourage him in the way of his Duty, in the House of God. You are also to look well, that an exact Discipline be kept up in the Church of God, without Partiality. And, Lastly, To look well to the Doctrines that are advanc'd most in the Church; and if Doctrines contrary to what you have learned, Then to observe the Words of the Text, *To mark those that bring them in, and avoid them* if by doing your utmost to convince them, and convert them, work not any Reformation in them.

Thirdly. ARE the Churches of Christ, whilst in this Militant State, liable to be assaulted with corrupt Doctrines, and to be drawn aside thereby? Then, from hence, we may be informed, that every Member thereof ought to be on his Watch. *Watch ye therefore*, saith our blessed Lord. We should be like the Partridges whilst in a Covie on the Earth, who stand all round with their Heads outermost, that let their Enemies come which way they will, one or other of them must see them, that they be not surprized unawares. Should so silly a Bird as a Partridge be so careful to preserve it self, and each other, and shall not we be on our Watch, to preserve our selves, and the Honour of God. We should all remember, what our blessed Lord said, while on the Earth. *What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.* There's no Time allow'd for spiritual Sleep, or Idleness.

Fourthly. ARE the Churches of Christ, whilst in this World, liable to be assaulted and drawn aside? From hence we may learn, and be informed, That these out of a Church-State, are more expos'd to Danger, and more liable to be drawn aside, than others, because they are alone, and have not that Assistance to Watch over them, as those in a Church-State have, yet they are liable to be assaulted. Let all, therefore, that are prepared of the Lord, get in, and put their helping Hand, to save the People of God, from the Errors of the Times. Other Uses might be made, but I rather choose to decline it on this Doctrine, and proceed to the Second, which is, *Second*

Second Doct. THE only way for the true Churches of Christ to keep themselves pure and free from Divisions, is to be found in the Discharge of this great Duty, of *Marking those that bring in these new Doctrines, and avoid them*, (i. e.) expell them out of their Societies. This Doctrine is naturally following from the Words, and so fully comprehended in them, that there is no need of further Proof. But to inforce it, I shall give some rational Arguments that this Doctrine doth present; herein are Three Parts.

First. THAT God the Father, and Christ his Son, have Churches on Earth.

Secondly. THAT it's the Duty of these Churches, to keep themselves pure from the Pollutions of the World, and the Doctrines of Men.

Thirdly. THAT the only way, to keep themselves pure, is to mark those that assault them with corrupt Doctrines, contrary to what they have learnt, and avoid them. As to the 1st,

First. THAT God the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, have Churches on Earth, is testified by almost all the Epistles, in the New Testament. In 1 Cor. 1. 2. *To the Church of God at Corinth.* Also in the 2d Epist. and Ver. 1. *To the Church of God which is at Corinth.* And in Chap. 1. Ver. 2. of the Epist. to the Galatians, *U to the Church of Galatia.* *Grace be to you, and Peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* And in 2d Epist. to the *Thessalonians*, Chap. 1. Ver. 1. *Unto the Church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.* The different way, the Apostle used to express himself, doth carry the same Weight and Strength, to prove what is before advanced, (to wit) That God the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, have Churches on the Earth.

I SHALL now enquire what a true constituted Church of God, or of Christ, is.

A TRUE Church of Christ is composed of a Company of Believers in Christ, congregated together by mutual Consent, in the Fear of God, to worship him, according to the Prescription given in his Gospel (e. i.) in the New Testament of his Son. From this short Description of a true Church of Christ, you may observe, the Matter of a true Church is Believers, such as are capable of forming themselves into a Body, by a mutual

Agree-

Agreement, giving up themselves to watch over one another, and to congregate together to worship God, according to his Appointments, and to keep up the Ordinances of his House, and to observe his Word to be our Rule, and that his Word is truly preach'd amongst them. You may also observe, that a true Church, hath full Power in her self, to constitute and organize her self; and being by mutual Consent become a Body, is independent of any other Power, or Sett of Ecclesiasticks, to make them more compleat than what they have or can make themselves. Now, having given you a short Description of what a true Church is composed of, and the Power lodg'd in her, I shall proceed to prove it a Duty, for a Church to keep it self pure; and that I shall do by shewing the Reasonableness of it, Why all Churches of Christ should keep themselves pure, from the Pollutions of the World and Doctrines of Men.

First. BECAUSE God the Father hath chosen his Church in Christ, before the Foundation of the World to be Holy, and without Blame before him in Love, *Ephes. 1. Ver. 4.* and in Chap. 5, 27. the Reason is rendered for what End, that he might present it to himself a Glorious Church, not having Spot or Wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be Holy and without Blemish. *1 Pet. 2 Chap. 9 Ver. But ye are a chosen Generation, a royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.*

Secondly. BECAUSE God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, hath required it of his Church, both under the Law, and under the Gospel. 'Tis the special Command of Heaven; that his Church and People do press after Holiness, in *Levit. 20. Ver. 7, 8. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye Holy, for I am the Lord your God, and ye shall keep my Statutes and do them; I am the Lord which Sanctify you. My Statutes, and not Mens, that are set up in Opposition to mine; but be ye holy in all manner of Conversation; for I am holy saith the Lord.* Another Reason,

Thirdly. BECAUSE Jesus Christ laid down his Life, not only to redeem his Church from eternal Death, but that She should be Holy without Spot or Wrinkle. To yield compleat Obedience to his Laws, and full Conformity to the divine Will, *Titus. 11. For the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared*

appeared unto all Men, teaching us to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly and godly in this present World, looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. Beloved Friends, if we are got into a Church-State, let us not flatter our selves that we are safe, and may now take our Ease, least we greatly deceive our selves; for our Work for God is but of a young Date. 'Tis even then at our going into a Church-State, that we engage our selves to act for God, in a more than common Manner. Now we have engaged our selves to serve our Lord and Master; and 'tis of such as you that are lifted under his Banner, that he expects to be zealous for his Honour, and to be careful to maintain good Works. 'Tis for this Cause Jesus Christ laid down his Life and shed his precious Blood, that he might redeem his People from all Iniquity.

Fourthly. TO demonstrate, That the Churches of God the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, ought as much as possible, to keep themselves pure, both in Doctrine and Practice; is, because it's one great Design, that God had in calling them out of the Rubbish of the World: And, to be otherwise than for Purity, gives their Profession the Lye; for every one that gives himself up to a Right constituted Church, doth profess to die to Sin, and to live unto God, in newness of Life; they take God the Father to be their Lord, and profess to be govern'd by his Laws, which are Holy, Just, and Good; they take Jesus Christ his Son to be their Prophet, to teach them, their Priest to atone for them, and their King to rule over them; here they give themselves up to him, as their Head and Husband, which Staté admits of no Disputes or Hesitations at his Laws, here they give themselves up to the holy Spirit, to be their Sanctifier and Cleanser from all Iniquity, Eph. 2. 19. and onward the Apostle there speaking of the growing of the Church, saith *Now therefore ye are no more Strangers and Foreigners, but fellow Citizens with the Saints and of the Household of God, and are built upon the Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief Corner Stone, in whom all the Building is joined together, groweth up to a holy Temple in the Lord.*

for an Habitation of God through the Spirit. And so they are no longer their own, but have given themselves up, by a Marriage Relation, to be ruled and governed by his Laws.

THE next Thing before me, is to demonstrate, that it's the only way for the Churches of Christ to keep themselves pure, by marking those that cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the true Doctrine of Christ, which they have learn'd, and to avoid them, (i. e.) expell them out of their Societies. But I would premise,

First. THAT I do not mean by the Word (Only) that no other Means should be used, as Prayer, and good Advice, and the like; but after, when all due Means have been used, and they fail, then you must not fail of using this, To keep the Body pure from corrupt Doctrines, which will effectually do it, (that is) to mark those that bring them in, and expell them out of your Societies. For the Demonstration of this, I shall give these Reasons.

First. THE Reason why it's the only way, is, because God hath prescribed this way as in our Text, He that is Wisdom itself, knows that the best way to preserve his Churches, from corrupt Doctrines, is to *Mark those that bring them, and avoid them.* We are fond of following the Advice of Men of Figure, in case of any Danger of Mortification, which happens to any Part of our Body, altho' the Operation proposed by the Surgeon is very hard, rather then the whole Body should perish by Neglect of Means, and yet 'tis possible, that this skilful Man, or Man of Figure, may be out: But my Friends, this great Operator, who works all Things after his own Council, cannot fail of the right way to preserve his Body the Church: Therefore, let not Fear on one Hand, nor Presumption on the other, cause you to neglect the using of the Prescription given in our Text, it being from Heaven, and not of Men: We may, and ought to conclude it the only right way, to expell those out, who bring corrupt Doctrines. Unto which, agreeth the Apostle, in 2 Cor. 6. 14. Where saith the Apostle, *Be ye not unequally yoked with Unbelievers; for what Fellowship hath Righteousness with Unrighteousness? And what Communion hath Light with Darkness? And what Concord hath Christ with Belial? Or, what Part hath he that believes with an Infidel.* He goes on further to set forth, the Unreasonableness of corrupt Doctrines being suffer'd,

as in Ver. 16. *And what Agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols? For ye (saith he)-i. e. (the Church of God) are the Temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my People.* From these Arguments of these Apostles in Ver. 17. he draws this conclusion; *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean Thing, and I will receive you; and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* As if the Apostle had said, Be not afraid, O gracious Soul! to go on in this so good a Work, to keep Error out of the Church, or to expell those that bring it in. Or, if thou canst not do that, then come out thy self, and I will own thee in so doing, and assist thee, as my Sons and Daughters; and I will manifest my self to thee, as a Father, and thou shalt be assisted and supported by me, who am able to do it, for I am God Almighty. This Word Almighty, seems to carry in it, that it's a Work of great Difficulty, to encounter with the Errors of the Times; and that gracious Souls are apt to be afraid how they shall go through it: But you have not the least Reason to doubt of Success, for God that hath called you to this Work is the Almighty God; and 'tis his Will, and the way of his own Appointment; and, therefore, the only way for Churches to keep themselves pure. Nothing is more plain in the New Testament, than that 'tis not only a way or means to keep corrupt Doctrines out of Churches; but where they are got in, and so fix'd in the Church that they are not to be got out by all due means used to that End, then 'tis the Duty of every Christian, whose Eyes are open'd to see those corrupt Doctrines to come out from among them, and be separate from them. I shall add two or three Reasons to inforce this Duty, and then answer some Objections.

THE First Reason is, Because corrupt Doctrines are infectious: I say, it's the Duty of Churches to keep themselves pure from corrupt Doctrines, because they are infectious; 'tis of a poisonous Quality. Sin in a Church is like the Leprosie, or the Plague in a House which is infected, as you have it in *Levit. 14. 34.* where you have Directions from the Lord himself, what to do with the House, into which he should send the Leprosie or Plague, and when all Means were made use of, as directed by the Lord, do fail, then to pull down the Stones of the Wall, and to cast them

them

them out into an unclean Place; which fully holds forth to us, that corrupt Doctrines ought not to be kept in a pure Church. The whole Passage is worth our reading: And, is it not common among Men, if they have a Tooth that is rotten to pull it out, that it infect not the rest adjoining to it? And those that keep Fruit are often looking over them, to take out the Defective, least they corrupt all that are about them: And, can we think to suffer corrupt Doctrines in the Church of God, and yet preserve the Body undefiled thereby? It's not to be done. You find the Apostle Paul saith, 1 Cor. 5. 6. *Know you not that a little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump.* This Church of Corinth, had suffered One to continue among them that was guilty of Fornication, which the Apostle look'd upon to be very dishonourable to God; therefore commanded them that when they were gathered together, in the Name of Jesus Christ, to deliver such a One to Satan for the Destruction of the Flesh, that the Spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord. *Know you not that a little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump? Purge out, therefore, the old Leaven, that ye may be a new Lump, as ye are unleavened.* (i. c.) As you profess your selves to be dead to Sin, so should you live in newness of Life unto God; for even Christ our Sacrifice is Holy: *Let us, therefore, keep the Feast not with old Leaven, but with the unleavened Bread of Sincerity and Truth.* But,

Secondly. BECAUSE it's the Duty of every Christian in particular, and of all true Churches of Jesus Christ, to contend earnestly for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints, as you have it in Jude's Epistle, Ver. 3. *When I gave all Diligence to write unto you of the common Salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that you contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints.* In the next Ver. gives the Reason why it was so needful to give them this Advice, because, *There are certain Men crept in unawares, who were of old ordained to this Condemnation, ungodly Men, turning the Grace of God into Lasciviousness; and denying the only Lord God; and our Lord Jesus Christ.* Whether they deny'd his Divinity or his Humanity, I cannot determine; but they then deny'd our Lord Jesus Christ; and so do some now, that are crept into the Church of Christ: And we have need to be stirred up with this Exhortation, *To contend earnestly for the Faith once deliver'd*

deliver'd to the Saints. Even so contend as not to be at Ease in *Sion*, whilst any of these corrupt Persons are in the Church of God; especially such as are Trumpeters of a new Gospel. But the Third Reason why we should endeavour to keep the Church of God pure from corrupt Doctrines, is,

Thirdly. BECAUSE the Suffering corrupt Doctrines in the Church of God is very provoking to God; God so highly resents it, that he threatens the Churches guilty of it, to spew them out of his Mouth, *Rev. 2. 12.* You'll find it written to the Church of *Pergamus*, That he who hath the sharp Sword with two Edges, saith, *I know thy Works, and where thou dwellest, and thou holdest fast my Name, and hast not deny'd my Faith.* (which is spoken more in their Praise than it can be said of some of us) But what follows? *I have a few Things against thee, because thou hast them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, who cast a stumbling Block before the Children of Israel. So also hast thou them that hold the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which Thing I hate,* (saith the Lord) Observe, they are not charged as a Church that owns such Things, but have such that do own them: Or, for suffering such to abide amongst them, that own corrupt Doctrines. This is so resented by the Lord as if they did own it themselves. *Repent, therefore,* (saith our Lord) *of this great Evil, or else I will come quickly and fight against thee with the Sword that is in my Mouth.* And to the Church of *Laodicea*, he threatens her, to spew her out of his Mouth for being Lukewarm. What can we expect then that are grown so cold, that scarce any Life is to be found amongst us for the Purity of God's House? Or, for what Errors are got in amongst us? Or, how it goes with the Church?

Fourthly. ANOTHER Reason is, Because it becomes Christians, as they are Christ's Soldiers, to be valiant for the Truth, and to fight against Error; every Christian that hath given himself up to a true Church, hath, or should, first give himself up to Christ as his Captain, and to be Christ's faithful Souldier, and as such to be at his Command, to wear his Livery in all Godliness and Honesty, and to fight under his Banner against the Flesh and the World, the Devil, and the false Church or corrupt Doctrine, being all Enemies to our Captain Jesus: *And as we are Soldiers, we ought to endure Hardness as good Soldiers of Jesus Christ, 2 Tim. 2. 3.* To endure Hardness as

a good

a good Soldier, is not at the first Attack to give out, and leave the Cause; but if hard beset and foiled, to rally again, and never give Way to Christ's Enemies to possess his Church, but to be restless, 'till they that hold corrupt Doctrines are expell'd out of it.

BUT here some do object, and say, What can I, or two or three poor Men do, when the Majority, and even our Minister, do espouse the Cause, and put fine Glosses on corrupt Doctrines, and declare he's of the same Judgment with those we oppose.

First. I answer, if the Case be so, and you have good Proof for it out of his Mouth, take no Notice of fine Glosses, but with all Humbleness of Mind, tell it to the Church, and with all Tenderness and Faithfulness, prove the Truth, as it is in Jesus, in Opposition to this corrupt Doctrine delivered; and wherein it doth appear to derogate from the Word of God, and Analogie of Faith, as the Church agreed to set down upon. Press the Church with Scriptures to do their Duty, as in our Text, *To mark these that bring in corrupt Doctrines and avoid them;* and after waiting and praying, and exhorting the Church to their Duty, and all failing, desire a Letter to another Church, and if that is deny'd thee, hearken to what the Apostle saith, 2 Cor. 6. 17. *Wherefore come out from amongst them, and I will receive you, saith the Lord. Be ye separate from them, and I will own you, and be a Father to you.* Wherefore the Apostle goes on in the next Chap. to improve this Promise to encourage Souls in the Discharge of their Duty, *Having therefore these Promises (dearly beloved) let us cleanse our selves from all Filthiness, both of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holyness in the Fear of God.*

Second Object.) **BUT** surely this must not be done, if it should, what will become of the Churches, or what will they come to, if on every Occasion, one must have a Letter to another Church?

I ANSWER, 'Twill be no Excuse at the Great Day, for the Neglect of our Duty, to say, We could not tell what would be the Event of Churches doing their Duty: For if we discharge not the Duties God hath required of us, we have more Cause to fear, what will be the Event of our Neglect. When we consider the Promise God hath made to us, in the doing of one Duty, and the Threats pronounced against us on our Neglect

glect. And as Edification is one chief End of Church-Com-
munion, we should pursue it in all religious Motions; and when
corrupt Doctrines are got into a Church, and are connived at,
or propagated, there can be no Edification to the serious Soul,
that desires the sincere Milk of the Word, that he may grow
thereby: So that such a Soul must either get Error out of a
Church, or get out himself: And if this Duty of Expelling was
faithfully performed, there would be no Need of asking for Letters.

Third Object.) SOME object further, and say, If any one
is dissatisfied with any thing the Church doth, he should enter
his *Protest* against it, and keep his Place in the Church.

I ANSWER, The Votes for this Opinion, are more for
Peace than for Purity, for a great Name in the World, than for
a good Name for God. This Doctrine of entering a Protest is
of the bottomless Pit; it was begot by the Devil and Midwiv'd
into the World by the Pope, and hath been hitherto nurs'd up
by the Clergy of almost all Perswasions: 'Twas in at this Door,
doubtless, that the Church of *Rome* received her Errors at first.
If this Doctrine take Place with us, there is no Room for that
Doctrine, that saith, *To the Law and to the Testimony, and if
they speak not according to this Word, 'tis because they have no
Light in them*, Isaiah, 8. 20. If this Doctrine can be allow'd
of in any Case, then farewell that Doctrine that hath been so
long contended for by all Protestants, (*viz.*) That the Word
of God ought to be our Rule for Faith and Patience. All the
Scriptures that have or may be mentioned, signifieth nothing;
Sin and Satan may dwell together in the Church by Allowance,
only Sin and Satan must be kept up in one Corner with this thin
Partition of bearing a Testimony against them. I cannot omit
speaking in the Behalf of Dissenting Ministers on this Head;
I never heard one of them that have preach'd up this rotten Do-
ctrine amongst their own People; or preach'd up to any one
that came off from others to join with them that they should
have enter'd their Protest and have kept their Places; but with
all Readiness received them, and gave them Encouragement to
go on in the Ways of Holiness, as they should receive Light
from the Lord, (in which they do well) But if this be a war-
rantable Practice to bear a Testimony, and keep their Places,
Why should not the *Presbyterians* tell the Church of *England*
Men, that come to join with them, That they ought to continue
in

in that Church in which they were call'd? And why should not the *Baptist* Minister tell the *Presbyterian* that is convinced of Believers Baptism, that they ought to bear his Testimony against Infant Baptism, and keep his Place? I say their Practice contradicts this Doctrine; and the Foundation of it seems to me, to be nothing else but Priest-Craft, to secure the Fleece.

Fourthly.) BUT it may be objected by some, that it is written in *Heb.* 13. 17. That we should *Obeÿ them that have the Rule over us, and submit our selves, for they watch for our Souls.* Some say that it's not the Minister as such that is here intended; notwithstanding it is one of the great Bulwarks that they fly to, if attack'd.

First. IT cannot be the Ministers here intended, because they are forbid Lording it over God's Heritage, 1 *Pet.* 5. 2. Which if 'twere they intended in these Words to be submitted to, there would be a Contradiction in Scripture, which there is not; that Ministers are neither named nor intended; for the Author of this Epistle, is in this Chapter setting forth, Duties religiously to be observed by us, in the several Stations God hath placed us in. First as Brethren to love one another; to entertain Strangers; and to remember them that are in Bonds; and also the Comeliness of Marriage, the Bed being undefiled, and so on to many Duties becoming Christians, of which these Words brought are very comprehensive of Duties of Inferiors to Superiors, the like you have in 1 *Pet.* 2. 18. As also, in *Col.* 3. 27. And *Tit.* 2. 9. Shewing that it becomes every Christian in the Place and Station God hath placed them in, to be subject to their Superiors. As if the Apostle had said, or did then find, or was afraid, that such a Spirit would attend Christians; as to think, because they are brought into so near a Relation as Brethren, that all Obedience of Inferiors to Superiors was destroy'd, and made null; but instead of which, he confirms the Obedience of Inferiors to Superiors, and gives this as a fresh Command to us, to submit our selves to those that have the Rule over us, those our Superiors; that it can be no other Obedience required of us, but to such as have a lawful or civil Right over us, as Parents or Masters: I urge for Consideration; that the Apostle never claimed it as due to himself, but told us that he was the Churches Servant for Christ's Sake: So that he had not this Power to require Obedience to his Will. But,
Secondly.

Secondly. BECAUSE then every Minister would have Power to make Laws Obligatory to all their Community, which our reformed Ministers do wholly disown.

BUT now let us consider the Text it self, and then we'll state the Question, whether it be Minister or Civil Governor; (this Ruler) whether the Obedience here required is limited, or unlimited; if unlimited, then every Minister must be a Pope in his own Precincts: We must also suppose, that if God had required Obedience from us to all the Commands of the Minister, then we must suppose also, that God hath endowed all his Ministers with such Qualifications, as to require Nothing of us, but what is agreeable to his Divine Will; and then every Minister must be a Pope, being infallible. All the Conveniency that I can see in this Doctrine, besides what accrews to the Minister, is, that we shall have no Need of sending over Sea for Bulls and Pardons; for there will be enough at Home, to those that are open handed. But to return, if we say the Text is to be understood of a limited Obedience, as none will take it upon them to say otherwise, then this Text will do them no Service for the Purposes for which it is brought; for then the Meaning of the Text must be this, You must obey them that have the Rule over you, whether Civil or Ecclesiastical, as you find their Commands agreeable to the Word of God; and then the Obedience here is not what Man requires, but what God commands: And when the Minister requires that of any under his Care (as they call it) that he cannot produce the Word of God for his Command, is of no Force; for we are commanded to follow them as they follow Christ. *Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ*, saith the Apostle; and so this great Bulwark is razed to the Ground.

Fifthly.) SOME object, and say, there should be a Subjection to the Majority of Voices, without which nothing can be determined.

TO this I answer, That in some small Circumstance the Majority may determine, As where to meet to serve God, or at what Time of the Day, or the like; this not touching Conscience, may be so determined; but any thing touching the Conscience, cannot be binding by a Majority; 'tis not the Multitude of Voters for corrupt Doctrines should be binding, but rather exciting thereto, *stand up for thy Lord and Master, and in De-*

sence of his Doctrine, expose thy self. And as for the Vote of the Majority of a Church to be binding on the Minority, to say no worse, is down right Popery. This Doctrine supps the Foundation of the Protestant Religion; should this be granted as Orthodox, then the Church of *Rome* is, and remains, a true Church, notwithstanding the Errors thereof; and the *Pope* himself hath Power to command Obedience to his Laws. This appears very conspicuous upon a Supposition, that a true Church of Christ, have Power in themselves to bring in a new Doctrine, and impose it on the Consciences of their poor Brethren, by a Majority of Voices: For, if the Churches now have such Authority to rule and govern the People, then they had the same Power in the primitive Times: If then, when the Church of *Rome* began to Apostatize, or suffer erroneous Doctrines to creep in amongst them, doubtless it was done by a Majority; and by the same Reason we may conclude, that after the Majority had govern'd some Time, and perhaps found it troublesome, they might chuse Twelve or Twenty Four, which in the Church of *Rome* are call'd Cardinals; at length to make it more easy, chose One out of this Number (as they do to this Day) to be Christ's Vicar, by the Majority of Voices, to prevent troublesome Debates, that perhaps did often arise. Now, to protect this new Doctrine, it's establish'd with Infallibility, and the Majority of the Church, what is or shall be Orthodox, and what not; and this Man being chosen by the Majority of the Church, is the Majority of the Church it self, being chosen by them to that aforesaid Office. So that if the Majority of Voices must determine Matters binding on the Consciences of the Minority, then the Church of *Rome* is yet a true Church, and the *Pope* infallible, and all that have separated from them are guilty of Schism.

BUT, I say, The Majority have no Power to impose on the Consciences of the Minority, altho' such a Minority be only One single Person: Therefore, I conclude, the Church of *Rome* to be Apostatized from the Truth, and become a false Church, and that the *Pope* is fallible as other Men; and that those who separated from the Church of *Rome* at first, were not guilty of Schism; neither will any one that separates from any true Church (that suffers corrupt Doctrines to be brought in among them, and don't discharge this Duty of marking the Bringer of them in, and expell them out) be guilty of Schism.

Fifthly.) ONE Objection more, and it is that which makes a great Noise in the World amongst all Perswasions, but most at *Rome*; and that is, That there should be no Schism in the Body: But Separation on any Account from a Church is a Schism in the Body; therefore a Separation is not to be allow'd of on any Terms whatsoever, 1 Cor. 12. 15. This Objection I am apt to think was first advanced in the Church of *Rome*; yet some Authors tell us, that the Heathen made a great Noise with this Word Schism, when the Papists broke off from them, to own a God and Jesus Christ: However, it's past all Doubt, that the Church of *Rome* did, and still do, use this Word, as the great Support to the introducing and keeping up the Superstitious Errors that are amongst them; for, 'tis very probable, that when Errors did first creep into the Church of *Rome*, the People were startled at them, and possibly made Opposition against them, and to cool the Zeal of the People, and carry on their Design of establishing Error by an Arbitrary Power, they fram'd this Word Schism, into a most dismal and frightful Idea; as if it was a damnable Thing to be guilty of Schism, let there never be so much Cause for it: And, 'tis almost the same with all Protestants, of what Name soever, they are distinguished to frighten the People out of that Sense that God hath given them, tamely to submit to the Dictates of their Ministers; which is too much the Case at this Day, even amongst Protestant Dissenters, the more to be lamented. The Unreasonableness of this Objection, by Protestants, is very apparent, who were guilty of the same Fact within Memory. For those on the other side of the mighty Water, that call themselves inflexible, have some Pretence of Reason, to blame those who separated from them, on a Supposition, that they believe themselves so to be: But for Protestants, who are in the Practice themselves, to condemn others for it, (to say no worse) is very unreasonable. Our Domestick Histories do furnish us with an Account how the Reformation began in *England*, and upon what Foot we cast off the *Pope's* Yoak; and with what Difficulty the Reformation was carry'd on to establish the Church of *England* for a true Protestant Church, so far as it is: And, now, for these very People to condemn those for Schismatics that dissent from them, and they but Dissenters themselves from the Church of *Rome*, is unreasonable. An Instance of this you have in

that great, and 'tis to be hoped, good Man, Bishop *Wilson*, in his explaining the Word Schism, who chargeth the Anabaptists and Brownists with Schism, in dissenting from the Church of *England*. Furthermore, is it not the same with all other Protestants, that have separated from the Church of *England*? The Presbyterian he condemns the Independent and the Baptists, for their Separation from them: And to say no better of the Baptists than of the rest of the Protestants, they are as ready to condemn and senfure all as Schismatics, that will not fall in with them, or dissent from Apostatizing with them into new and rotten Doctrines, as *Aminianism* and *Arianism*, that is now advancing amongst them, to their Shame be it spoken; that altho' they do own themselves liable to err and that it is the Priviledge of every Member of any Society, to be fully satisfied in his Judgment, that he falls in with no Doctrines but what have the Word of God for their Warrant and Defence: Yet are they as forward in this as any other People. All they can say in their Defence is, that they be true right constituted Churches, tho' not infallible. Now, the Church of *Rome* can say, that they were once, a right constituted Church: But, we say they are fallen, and therefore, it's lawful, nay a Duty, to separate from them: So likewise, must we own, if we will not offer Violence to our Reason, that 'tis as lawful, and as much a Duty, to separate from any modern Church, how pure soever it hath been in it's Constitution, when it shall Apostatize in it's Doctrine or Practice; nor may we account them guilty of Schism that so do.

Now let us consider the Text, brought to support this great Objection, in *1 Cor. 12. 25. That there should be no Schism in the Bd.* 'Tis beyond all Dispute, that this Church of *Corinth* was fallen into many and great Disorders, and some Body had transmitted them to the Apostle *Paul* for his Advice what to do; the Apostle as a faithful Servant of Christ, gave his Advice to one Thing after another, as you may observe throughout the whole Epistle; and in the Chapter in which these Words are, the Apostle insinuates as if it had been suggested to him, That there were some amongst them, that were so advanced in their own Opinion of spiritual Gifts above some of their poor Brethren, that they were even ready to despise and contemn those of an inferior Stature to themselves. 'Tis very probable that those

so lifted up in their own Conceit of their great Attainments in spiritual Things, were rich also in the Things of this Life, (even as 'tis at this Day) and the other very poor, which made them that were rich despise them, and account them as insignificant in the Church of God; which Disorder the Apostle sharply re-proves in Ver. 23, 24. of this Chap. and we may observe how gently he ushers in his Reprimand, as if he himself had been guilty of this or the like Fault; he puts in himself as if he was one of them that was so rash in his Thoughts of his poor Brethren. After he had in many Things set forth the Wisdom of God, in so tempering the Body with Great and Small, Strong and Weak, that none might boast over another, or account that one hath no Need of the other, as in the preceding Verses; he comes in this 23d Ver. to make a Conclusion of the whole; and acquaints us, that *Those Members, which we think to be less honourable, on these we bestow more abundant Honour, and our uncomely Parts have put on them more abundant Comeliness: For our comely Parts have no Need: But God hath so temper'd the Body, together, having given more abundant Honour to that Part which lacked.* To what End hath God done all this? Why saith he, *That there should be no Schism in the Body.* As if the Apostle had said, My Brethren, let us not be lifted up in our own Opinion and Conceit, that we are better or more deserving these Gifts and Enjoyments, than our poor Brethren that have them not. But, consider, that 'tis the Wisdom and Goodness of God that hath bestowed them on us, that our uncomely Parts might not appear; which might have been much worse than our poor Brethren, that we are ready to despise: 'Tis of his Grace that he hath made any Difference; and, therefore, let us not be puffed up, but know that we are but Stewards for God, and must be accountable for those Gifts another Day, both of Temporal as of Spiritual Learning: Therefore, so behave your selves towards your poor Brethren, with that tender Regard, as to supply their Wants, relieve their Necessities, so that there may be no Schism made in the Body, by your unchristian Behaviour towards them: Nay, if you are strong in the Faith, and great in Gifts of Knowledge, as you conceit your selves to be, yet carry it with that Meekness and Condescension towards these your poor weak Brethren, as may strengthen their Faith, encourage their Hope, so that you be by no Means any Stumbling Block

in their Way, and so cause a Schism in the Body ; but you that are thus qualified with Power and Gifts, see to it, that your Deportment in the Church of Christ is such, that there be no Schism made in the Body by your unbecoming Behaviour. So that the Argument of the Apostle seems to be a strong Injunction on the Church, that they make no Schism, and not on those Brethren who see Cause to separate : And, if this be not the genuine Meaning of the Apostle, I must confess my self to be wholly ignorant what it is. The Way to understand Words, or what the Design of God is to teach us by his Word, is to make Use of the Context, before and after, as a Key ; and then here is not the least Pretence, That the Apostle should design to teach us, that we should not separate from a Church under any Consideration whatsoever, tho' the Church be never so rightly constituted. If it continues not pure in Doctrine and Practice, it is not only Lawful, but a Duty, (as hath been before asserted) to separate from it, and not to continue in it, let it Apostatize never so far, as some strain their Wits to understand it : But, I shall make some Use of this Doctrine.

First. IS it so, That it's the only Way to keep the Churches of Christ pure, by marking those that introduce new or corrupt Doctrines and expell them ? Then they that not only neglect this Way, but endeavour to baffle those who practice it, are greatly to blame, and are guilty of a Breach of Trust. Hath God put Ministers as Watchmen on high Towers, the better to observe the Approach of the Enemies of the Church of God, to apprise them of the Danger, and to look after the Affairs of his House ? And shall these Men not only refuse to do their own Duty, but discourage others from doing theirs ? This is a very great Provocation to the Almighty.

Secondly. FROM hence let us learn to make the Word of God our Rule, and to put in Practice what God hath enjoined upon us, and not to think that we are wiser than the Almighty, to find out better and softer Methods than God hath left us. Hath God said, *Contend earnestly for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints* ? And shall his Ministers call such as do so, Malabert or fancy Fellows, and Disturbers of the Churches Peace ? Hath God said, *Mark those Persons that bring in new Doctrines, and expell them* ? And shall Ministers say, There are some that are more corrupt than these ; and, therefore, we will keep these in,

in, least we should be forced to be glad of those that are worse? What do these say less, Than that there are a very bad sort of Ministers coming about, and that we are like to be in a Necessity of making Use of them? O my Friends! I am afraid there is too much Truth in this: Let us, therefore, cry mightily to God, that he would send Labourers of his own quallifying, and not of Mens: Let us fall down before the Lord and confess our Faults, in looking to Men as we have done, and say, Surely tis but what we justly deserve at the Hands of God, for us to have broken Cisterns given us, that will not hold the Truth in Uprightness. I now proceed to the Third Doctrine.

Thirdly. WHERE these new Doctrines are creeping into Churches, and the People are so fallen asleep that they see it not, 'Tis there the great Duty of Ministers, as Watchmen on high Towers, to make a Discovery thereof, and endeavour as much as in them lieth, to awake the People out of their sleepy Frame, and beseech them to *Mark those that cause Divisions amongst them with Doctrines contrary to what they have learned, and to avoid them.* The Method I propose for the Prosecution of this Doctrine is,

First. TO prove that Ministers are set in the Churches of Christ as Watchmen on high Towers.

Secondly. THAT it's their Duty, as Watchmen, to endeavour as much as in them lies, to apprize the People of these new Doctrines, or of any Danger approaching, and to stir up the People to mark those that bring them in.

First. THAT Ministers are set in the Churches as Watchmen on high Towers. This hath an Allusion to, or borrowed from a civil Watch, that is set in a Garrison or Army, to give Notice to others if any Danger be: And so the Ministers of Christ are set in the Church of God, to give Warning of the Approach of any spiritual Enemy. In *Ezek. 3. 16.* you have it thus, *And it came to pass that the Word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of Man, I have made thee a Watchman unto the House of Israel: Therefore have the Word at thy Mouth, and give them Warning from me.* Nothing can be more full than this, That God hath made Ministers Watchmen, and that they are to warn the People, as authorized so to do from the Lord; and in *Isaiah 52. 8.* *Thy Watchman shall lift up his Voice.* What to do? To warn the People of their Iniquities, and to shew them

them the Danger they are in: But, there are some, (as the same Prophet in Chap. 56. 10. complained of) in this Office, that discharge not this Duty of warning the People, and they are called, *Blind Guides; they are ignorant; they are all dumb Dogs, they cannot bark.* Yea, (saith the Prophet) *they are greedy Dogs that cannot have enough, and they are Shepherds that have no Understanding in the Mind and Will of God; every one looks to his own Way; every one for his own Gain.* A plain Characteristick how we may know the Watchmen of God from those that only call themselves so, and are not, but are blind Guides, Deceivers of the People; and, they are such that preach another Gospel, tho' 'tis not another, as saith the Apostle to the *Galatians*, who were bewitched by some to give Ear to it, *Gal. 3.* and throughout the rest of the Epistle, where the Apostle most excellently reasons with them about that very Doctrine that's now revived, and much applauded of by the carnal Professors of this Age, to the Grief of Godly Souls, (many, as I hope) that love the Lord Jesus Christ, and own his imputed Righteousness, for their Justification, and cannot yet comply with this new pretended Gospel. But to return.

I SAY, Ministers are set in the Church as Officers in a Garrison or Guard, that is put therein, to watch for it's Security; and 'tis the proper Work of the Officer, not only to watch himself, but see that others do it, whose Work it is; and for the better Security of the Garrison, the Officer marcheth his Rounds in the most difficult Hours, to see if the Guard is upon their Watch, and to exhort them to stand fast, and quit themselves like Men. The faithful Officer doth not doze himself, and endeavour to stupify others, as some Ministers now do, to introduce erroneous Doctrines into the Church of God. And can any one think, that if an Officer of a Garrison do thus, and neglect his Duty, of apprizing the People of Dangers approaching, and any one Freeman of this City, should espy an Enemy got into the Garrison, and he tells the Officer thereof, and in a Spirit of Meekness reproves the Officer of his Neglect, dare that Officer say, That it's absurd for the Freeman thus to do, and that he's a Malapert for so doing, seeing the Garrison is in Danger? Or, can we think that the supreme Governor of this City or Garrison, will so resent the good Office of this Freeman that hath thus discharged his Duty, or Trust reposed in him, as
to

to call him a Malapert? No! No! But he will contrarywise say unto him, Well done my good, and faithful Servant, I will make thee Ruler over Ten Cities. Having fully proved that Ministers are set as Watchmen on a high Tower, I proceed to prove,

Secondly. THAT 'tis the Duty of the Minister, as a Watchman, to warn the People, under his Care, of any approaching Danger. This is very plain to be their Duty from the Nature of their Office, that God hath called them to, and hath commanded them to be found in the Practice of, Ezek. 3. 6. If the Watchman see the Sword coming, and blow not the Trumpet, and the People be not warned, so as the Sword take any away in their Iniquity, their Blood will I require at the Hands of the Watchman. Why at the Watchman's Hands? Because, as if God had said, Because to that End I did put him in that Office, and have commanded him to give Warning to my People. So if Ministers suffer Errors to creep into the Churches, and make not an Outcry against them, and warn not the People, the Ruine and Corruption of that People, shall be required at the Watchman's Hands: But if they are warned, and will sleep on 'till they are drowned with Error, the Guilt be upon the People.

BUT some may object, and say, that, I have put the Minister in particular in the Doctrine, and he's not mentioned in the Text; which looks as if I had a Design to load him with Duties more than is meet.

I ANSWER as before, Because it's the proper Work of a Minister, that by his Office he is called to by the Great God, as hath been before proved.

Secondly. 'TIS to this Work he is called, and set apart by the Church in which he is: And, in this, sure, he may be justly said to be the Churches Mouth, to speak to them, and give them Warning of any Danger approaching; but not to speak for them but as they shall direct him.

Thirdly. 'TIS because they are gifted and qualified for the Work, or ought so to be that take upon them the Work of a Minister. Not to exclude any one Member, to whom God shall give a discerning Eye from being found in the Discharge of this Duty, of being upon his Watch, and from warning the rest of his Brethren: But Ministers are called, and particularly qualified, and set apart by the Lord and his People to it; there

fore it can be esteemed no Design in me to load Ministers with any Duties but what God hath done, *Ezek. 3. 16, 17.* There the Lord speaks by the Mouth of his Prophet, *I have made thee a Watchman to the House of Israel.* They that are called of God to this Work, are gifted and qualified of him for the Work, and not by Men. And I wott that those that have only the Call of Men, would dread the Undertaking of this Office. But to make some Use of it,

First. IF it be so, that it's the Duty of the Ministers of the Gospel, as Watchmen on high Towers, to give Warning to the People, under their Care, of any Danger approaching. Then we may learn from hence, that those Ministers who are fallen fast asleep, or are in a luke-warm Frame and Condition, are in a very unbecoming Posture to their Office, and altogether unfit to discharge the Trust reposed in them. What can a sleepy Man do, or one that is stupified with Error, or byass'd by those that are? Nothing but Silence can be expected from him, or that which is worse.

Secondly. WE may learn from hence, that those that have took upon them this Office, and have been entrusted to look after a People, as a Shepherd, to feed them with sound Doctrine, and to warn them of Evil; and yet make no Conscience of doing it, are Traytors to the King of Heaven, who hath put this Trust in them; and are blind Guides to the People of God that called them to this Work. Oh, dismal and lamentable will be the Condition of those another Day! Or when God shall awaken them out of this sleepy Frame! But, some may ask me who be those, or how shall I know them that are thus stupified and byass'd? I answer,

First. THEY are such as mince their Principles, and adapt their Doctrines to please Men; to please the Ears of their best Paymasters. If they are such in Principle as require it, They then advise to preach up practicable Godliness, and not to set up the People with Notions. As if the establishing the People in sound Principles of Religion, did set aside, or destroy Godliness. A mere shift to evade their Duty, and to please the Purse; and those that thus do, you have Reason to conclude, are some of those before mentioned.

Secondly. THEY do not only mince their own Principles, but endeavour to put a fine Dress on others, and plead for
E
Charity

Charity to be extended towards them; and tell you, they have a great deal to say for what they own; and so will paint and varnish them over, that they know to be corrupt in Doctrine, that they may preach where they do. And if any one's Eyes are so opened, as to see the Errors delivered, and speak of them, then the Minister of that People say, 'Tis a Mistake, and that the Man is as sound as himself; which may be true, and yet bad enough. But this Man having been once counted sound, by his thus speaking, the People fall perhaps to sleep again; And if any should be so valiant for the Truth, as to insist against the Error, and will not take his Ministers Word, he is then a malapert contentious Man, that wants to advance himself, &c.

Thirdly. THEY that refuse to declare their Principles plainly and fully, and refuse to preach against the Errors of the Times, are doubtless some of those blind Guides. 'Tis not a sufficient Reason for any Minister to be silent, or to refuse to preach against *Arminianism*, and *Arianism*; because such a great Man, or such a good Man hath embraced it. There is such a famous Man that is at a Stand about it; and such a Doctor favours it. In fine, let their Excuses be what they will, 'tis because they are corrupt themselves, or else that they want Faithfulness to their Lord and Master, and so are blind Guides to the People.

I SAY, let them say what they will, believe them not, they are Traytors to the King of Heaven, in having any Man's Person in Esteem more than the Truths of Jesus Christ.

BUT some may now ask me, what shall a Person, or a Few that see Errors coming in amongst them like a Flood, and have made an Alarm, and can't prevail to awaken the People to join Issue with them, or him, to keep Error out of the Church? Why he must do his utmost to convince the People that 'tis Error, and that it ought as such to be purged out; and if they will not be warned, then hearken to the Advice of the Apostle to the *Corinthians* 2 Epist. Chap. 6: 17. *Wherefore come out from amongst them and I will receive you, and be a Father to you.* What greater Encouragement can a Soul desire in the Discharge of his Duty, notwithstanding what Men shall say or do unto him, than for God to say, *I will be your Father*? I shall conclude with a word of Advice.

GIVE not Way to Sleepiness and Indifferency in Matters of Religion : Think it not enough that you are got into the Church of God, and that you keep your Place there; but consider you are also to be upon your Watch, not only over your own Hearts Lust, but also over your Bretheren, even over your Minister, to see that he is good in his Life, sound in his Principles, and that he preacheth sound Doctrine. You are commanded to take Care how, or what you hear; and if you find your Minister to be infected with the Errors of the Times, to purge out this Corruption; because, *A little Leaven Leaveneth the whole Lump.* And you are commanded to, *Contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints.* And so I conclude with the Words first read, *Mark those that cause Divisions amongst you, contrary to the Doctrine you have learnt, and avoid them.*

*February the 17th 1742 This Book was found by me this day in my Closet How it came I know not It of wayly eloquence for the Confidant of God promised with Gods grate directed by all members of Churches
Thos. Spode*

FINIS.



